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QUEST ACTIVITIES REPORT

**CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION
IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION
SGA 2023**



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the European Union**

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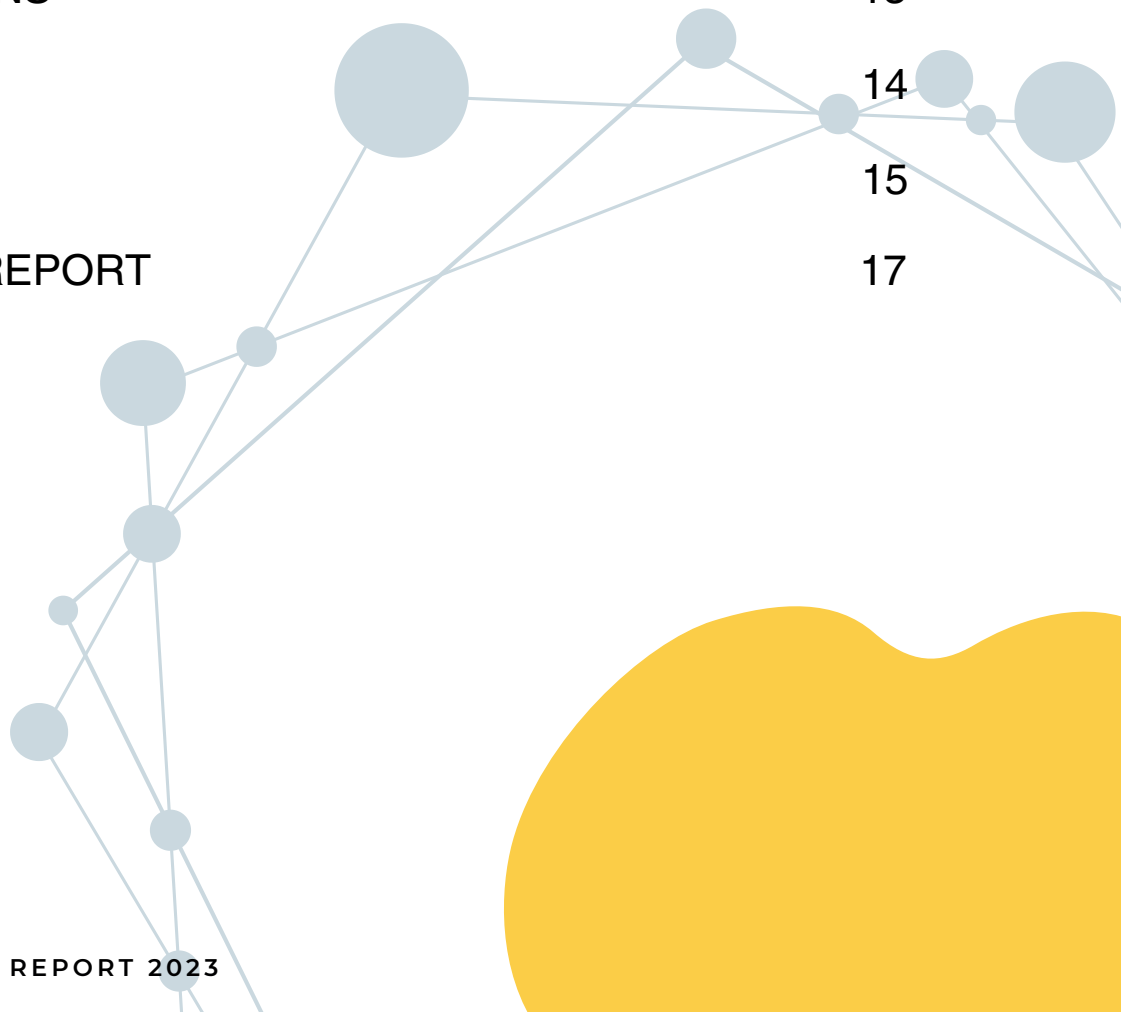
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WHO WE ARE

QUEST stands for Quality Education in Europe for Sustainable Social Transformation. We are an independent, democratic and participatory European network aiming to bring together NGOs, institutions, schools and universities **advocating for change in education and the promotion of lifelong learning.**

Our network currently counts **60 member** organisations from more than 17 countries, including 48 members from within the EU.

Together with our members, we conduct research projects, conferences, trainings, workshops, and work to have an impact on EU policies. We aim to serve as a multiplier of best practices, actions and research.

*Connecting
for Educational
Change*

OUR MISSION

Our mission is to connect educational organisations in order to promote a more **democratic, inclusive and sustainable** education in Europe and beyond **through research, policy and projects.**

OUR VISION

QUEST sees that the future of Europe relies on the capacity to build an educational system based on democratic, inclusive and sustainable principles. QUEST works to allow education to evolve harmoniously with the rapid changes of our world and supports schools and other learning institutions to rely on innovative pedagogies. Therefore, QUEST's vision aligns with the **European Education Area** strategic framework. We indeed believe that everyone should benefit from an education that guarantees personal, social and professional fulfilment, whilst promoting democratic values, equality, social cohesion, active citizenship, intercultural dialogue and sustainable economic prosperity.



OUR STRATEGY

ADVOCATING
for change in the
European learning
landscape

CONNECTING
education
organisations in
Europe

RESEARCHING
on democratic,
sustainable and
inclusive education

OUR AREAS OF WORK

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Research, policy activities and projects towards legitimisation, spreading and promotion of democratic education practices in Europe.

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Research, policy activities and projects welcoming and supporting all learners and removing any obstacle to access to quality education for everyone.

SUSTAINABILITY IN EDUCATION

Research, policy activities and projects towards sensitising, spreading and promoting best practices of sustainability in education in Europe.



OUR TEAM

Our Brussels based office is a multilingual and multicultural environment that allows the development of an open, united, responsible and sustainable spirit. Putting our values in actions, the office is based on a participatory governance, using sociocracy, nonviolent communication and shared consent decision making as statutory principles.

POLICY and RESEARCH CIRCLE



Martina Paone
Coordinator



Gabrielle Franck
Policy Officer



Mathilda Diaz
Policy Assistant

PROJECT CIRCLE



Mia Schmallenbach
Project Manager



Sara Bentass
Project Assistant



Dario Cabornero
Administration Assistant

COMMUNICATION and MEMBERSHIP CIRCLE



Roxane Hoedemakers
Membership Officer



Samantha Adler de Oliveira
Communication Officer



Agata Bernatek
Communication Assistant

QUEST IN NUMBERS 2023



+39

New members
from +13 new countries

13 Education trainings
and workshops



10

Publications

6 New full-
time staff



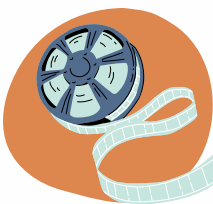
8 Travels to
visit our
members



18 Events attended
including 3 international
conferences



7 Videos
1 documentary film
6 short videos



3 New social
media channels

HIGHLIGHTS 2023

SECURING THE OPERATING GRANT

In 2023 we obtained an EU Operating Grant in the framework of Civil Society Cooperation in Education. This was an important reconfirmation of QUEST value, while at the same time it ensured the possibility of organisational growth and capacitation. This brought great benefit for our headquarter as well as for our members.

INCREASING OUR POLICY AREA

In this year, we have boosted our policy actions in order to make our members' voice heard in Europe. We hired a policy officer, built a policy strategy and increased our presence and impact on the policy level by attending conferences, meeting institutions and organisations, writing policy statements and recommendations.

MEMBERSHIP GROWTH

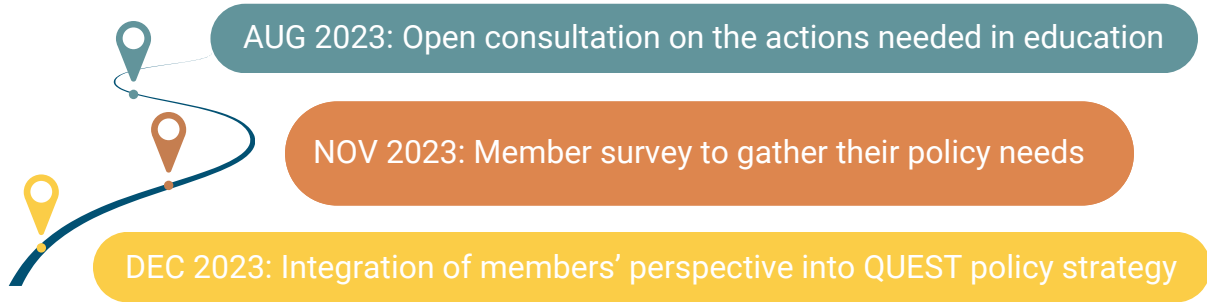
Our member organisations almost tripled in 2023, going from 22 to 60 members while at the same time we expanded in 13 more countries! The membership outreach was mirrored by a great care in informing, training and connecting our members.



INCREASING OUR POLICY AREA

POLICY AND ADVOCACY STRATEGY

QUEST is forging a Policy strategy responsive and reflective of its members' needs. Here below a roadmap of how we built the policy strategy.



POLICY SYSTEM CREATION

- Hiring of a policy officer and a policy assistant
- Weekly EU news checking system established
- Creation of Foreign Affairs Action Committee (FAAC) to reflect on international events
- Institutional mapping of all the organisations met through events and research
- Events mapping to ensure QUEST's presence
- QUEST glossary to define and communicate our understanding on key educational concepts
- Creating policy consultation with members in view of a bottom up policy strategy

SOME POLICY ACTIONS

- Joining the Erasmus+ coalition
- Taking part in the Civics Innovation Hub
- Becoming European Climate Ambassador
- Applying to the EU Transparency Registry
- Organising a webinar on the midterm review of the European Education Area
- Organising the policy member forum

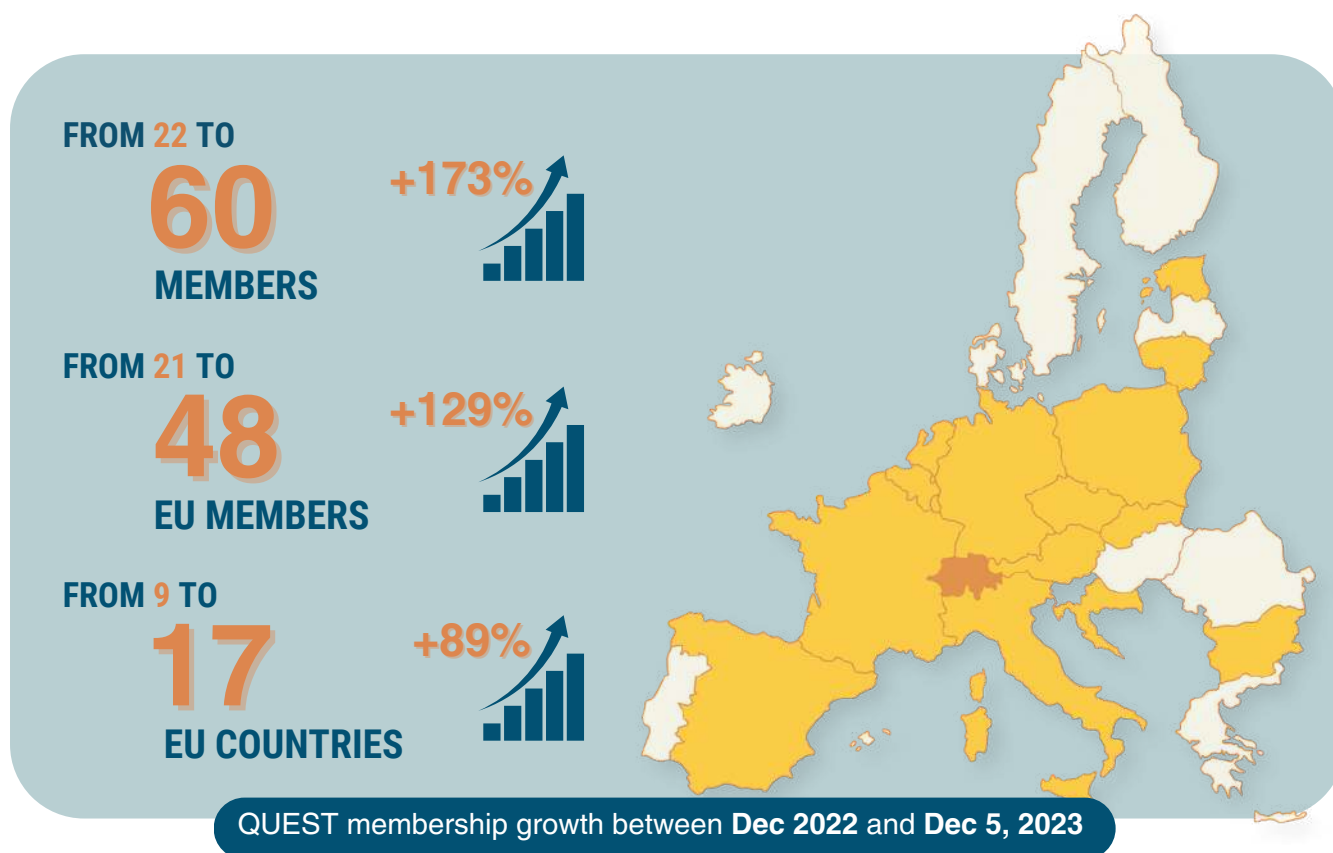


SOME POLICY EVENTS ATTENDED

- Skills, skills, skills. September 20, 2023
- 90th QoC Talk: Environments for children and youth and mental health. September 27, 2023
- Policy meeting with the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities. September 27, 2023
- Member Forum on Education in nature. September 29, 2023
- World Teachers Day. October 5, 2023
- European Education Area Midterm Review. October 10, 2023
- Reimagining the Future of Democratic Engagement and Collective Decision-Making - ASHOKA. October 12, 2023
- Mind the Gaps Skills and learning in a changing world. October 12, 2023
- World Forum for Democracy. November 6-8, 2023
- Child in the City Conference. 20-22 November 2023
- Inter-Ministerial Committee Meeting - European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education (CULT). November 27-28, 2023
- LifeLong Learning Week and Stakeholder Forum. November 27-29, 2023
- European Education Summit. November 30, 2023
- The European Day of Persons with Disabilities. December 1, 2023
- Training on EU Policy. December 7-8, 2023



MEMBERSHIP GROWTH



As of 5 December 2023, the QUEST network consists of a **total number of 60 members across 23 countries**.

In terms of the organisational types within the network (in Europe), we have a majority of schools (25/60) followed by 21 educational organisations or training community (both commercial organisations, and not-for-profit) which equates to 43% of all EU members. Lastly, QUEST network also includes inter-governmental bodies and Universities in minor percentage.

Compared to last year, our European network contains 212% more schools (growing from 8 to 25), and 63% growth in organisations from the wider education and training community (from 13 to 21) compared to the previous year.

These 48 European members practices and develop varying pedagogies and educational methodologies, with the ratio of area of work being the following; Democratic Education: 17 (35%); Social Inclusion: 8 (16%); Nature pedagogies and/or sustainability: 10 (20%); Other: 13 (27%) (e.g. experiential learning, digital education, lifelong learning, etc.) Please note that many members are cross-disciplinary organisations, and cannot be attributed to a single category.



MEMBER FORUMS

Member Forums are permanent working groups gathering our members around key topics. They reunite members according to their expertise and allow to link QUEST pillars to relevant issues at European level. QUEST held **5 member forums** in 2023.

AUG 6
2023

2 MEMBER FORUMS ON DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

Highlights included the screening of our QUEST documentary "**Suvmäe: Pioneer of Possibility**" following a discussion about strategies to promote children's rights.



SEPT 29,
2023

MEMBER FORUM ON NATURE EDUCATION & SUSTAINABILITY

Featured a nature pedagogy workshop with speakers from *European SchoolNet* and *European Democratic Education Community*, followed by a QUEST overview of the EU policy on sustainability in Education and a Member discussion.

This event was key to (1) creating a space to learn and develop knowledge about policy and practices in nature and sustainability in education (2) to interact and network among members on such topics.

AUG
2023

MEMBER FORUM ON POLICY

Held in hybrid format during EUDEC conference 2023 in Sofia, Bulgaria. As part of our Policy Strategy, we guided a workshop to identify policy needs in different EU countries and what QUEST could bring attention to at the EU level towards their needs.

NOV 28,
2023

MEMBER FORUM ON COMMUNITY, CITIZENSHIP & LIFELONG LEARNING

This member Forum featured an online event on "**Open schooling: inspirations and exchanges**" where three guest speakers held presentations on the theory and practices of Open Schooling followed by an open discussion where QUEST members and others could ask questions and exchange experiences about the relationship between schools and local community.

DEC 13,
2023

MEMBER FORUM ON INCLUSION

We discussed best practices on inclusion of children with special needs and disabilities in education through the experiences of guest speakers. Two schools -*De Walk* in Belgium and *Instituto Comprensivo G. Carducci-Busca* in Italy gave insights into their school's inclusion practices, ranging from the school's structure and organisation, to the learning methods and skills needed to welcome diversity. Participating members could ask questions and generate debate around their inclusion practices.



ACTIVITIES

Apart from the Member Forums, QUEST organised **8 activities** in 2023, ranging from trainings to webinars on specific topics in line with QUEST mission. This is our way to capacitate members and external organisations, sharing knowledge and inform about educational developments.

MAY 4
2023

TRANSFORMING EDUCATION THROUGH DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION

QUEST delivered a webinar about Transforming Education through Democratic Education in collaboration with its member *Evolving Education*. The purpose was to exchange opinions about different educational methodologies and the connected researches that QUEST is doing.



EVENT EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO BE AGENTS OF INCLUSION

AUG
2023

- During the *European Democratic Education Conference*, QUEST organised a discussion with students about becoming active contributors to inclusion as opposed to passively learning about the topic. Introduced by a screening of video material depicting QUEST's previous work on inclusion, the discussion put in evidence the need for more work to be invested in this direction, thus helping to define future areas of focus.

OCT
2023

- During the *International Conference on Democratic Education* in Kathmandu, a similar session was organised to discuss with students the role of children on the forefront of inclusion. A short preview video was screened to show how children can be actors of inclusion by working with training therapy animals. This led to an extraordinary session with the kids and was used as an example of what future IDEC and EUDECs would like to achieve in terms of children participation.



OCT 19
2023

TRAINING SOCIOCRACY IN SCHOOLS

Participants were invited to learn about the concept of sociocracy applied in schools, and to receive practical guidance on implementing these tools in their own school. They were provided insights on the history, key principles and benefits of sociocracy. Following the presentation of each key principle, participants were invited to conduct small exercises to put the sociocratic theory into practice - such as exercises on linked circle structures, decision-making by consent, and feedback loops.



ACTIVITIES

NOV 22
2023



WORKSHOP INTRINSIC VS EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

An online training session was structured around:

- A lecture by Magi Blagoeva, one of the founders of the Democratic School in Sofia, about the functioning of the brain, its development over millions of years and how this relates to learning
- A talk by Matteo Sturlese, teacher in the libertarian school *Albero della Tuscia* in Italy about intrinsic motivation vs. extrinsic motivation and how to foster the latter.

DEC 7
2023

NATURE PEDAGOGY WEBINAR

For the webinar '*Nature as a learning space*', we invited Matteo Sturlese, teacher in the libertarian school in nature *Albero della Tuscia*, to talk about children's learning in nature. We discussed what nature pedagogy is and how a day in a nature school looks like, the benefits for children, the role of teachers and how to start bringing students outdoors.



DEC 11-12
2023

ERASMUS+ FUNDING TWO-DAYS TRAINING

ERASMUS+ KA1

(Learning Mobility of Individuals)

In this info session on Erasmus+ fundings, we introduced our members to the technical and practical aspects of the application for Erasmus+ KA1. Laurence Watticant, international coordinator with a focus on Erasmus+ and Tomi Martinjak, project coordinator and trainer of Erasmus+, gave our members an overview of Erasmus+, general and specific objectives of Erasmus+ projects, areas of work within KA1, how and when to apply, what to expect, how is the evaluation process, and what are the application steps.

ERASMUS+ KA2

(Cooperation among organisations and institutions)

This info session on Erasmus+ fundings was led by Mia Schmallenbach, Project Manager at QUEST. She introduced the members to all aspects of the Erasmus+ KA2 application: formulation of the project's idea, creation of a partnership, project writing and budgeting.



PUBLICATIONS

QUEST has created **10 articles and publications** in 2023. Most of them have been published on our website or in academic journals.

- New approach towards acquisition of democratic skills in children: building skills through training therapy animals academic article coauthored by Martina Paone for Tiltai journal, published in December 2023 .
- Opening schools: Embracing learner’s and society’s mutual imprint, a position paper and guidelines on the importance of promoting an open-schooling approach, where schools and learners contribute to society while learning from society and developing their own skills.
- Learning beyond walls : The imperative for recognising outdoor practices in the curriculum. In light of the growing need for a more holistic and practical approach to education, this position paper advocates for the integration of outdoor practices into mainstream curricula.
- The Potential of Democratic Education in Nature - An Empirical Analysis, an Academic Article by Martina Paone, in the Academic Journal Curriculum (open source). Forthcoming.
- What is the Green competences Framework, explaining with concrete examples what the GreenComp Framework could mean for QUEST members, define the concepts of sustainability and sustainability competence, as well as how they could be implemented in teaching.
- The European Education Area : Where is education heading in the EU? An article with the results of the European Education Area midterm review.
- Teachers shortages and demotivation : a reality we must transform
- “Nothing about us without us” : Youth demanding meaningful participation at the UN about Youth asking for meaningful participation at the decision making table for the Sustainable Development Goals.
- IDEC 2023 – Democratic Education across the World offering an overview of the International Democratic Education Conference and the educational landscape of global game changers.
- Request for clarification on ‘compulsory’ education. QUEST participated in an international press release centered around World Children’s Day to call to the United Nations’ Committee on the Rights of the Child to clarify that “compulsory education” means a guarantee of universal access to education and does not mean forcing a child to attend school.



VIDEOS

QUEST has put in place an audiovisual strategy aiming at making its educational approaches more tangible and reaching a broader public. We have released video materials of different lengths and depths, disseminating them through social media, dedicated screenings events, or as part of our workshops and trainings. In total we released **6 short video's and 1 documentary film**.

THEMATIC SHORT VIDEO SERIES

Through this very short video format, QUEST aims to introduce key education concepts and practices to the general public.



"SUVEMAE, PIONEER OF POSSIBILITY"



This medium-length documentary film tells the story of a democratic school within a public school in Estonia, and constitutes an important case study of self-directed learning practices in public schools.

The film premiered at the EUDEC Conference 2023 in Bulgaria

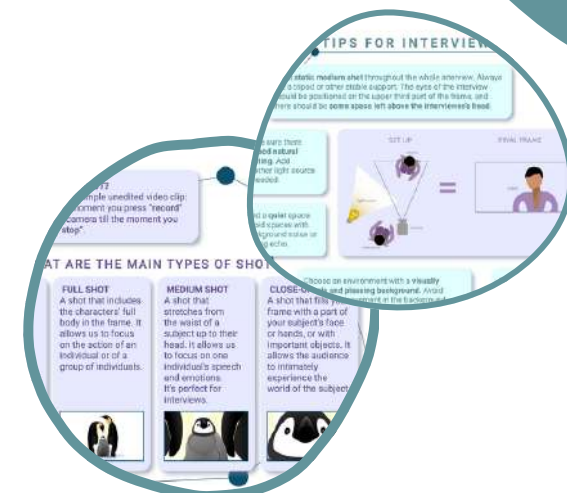
QUEST PRESENTS ITS MEMBERS SHORT VIDEO SERIES

Started in December 2023, this video series aims at increasing the visibility of our members, their unique organisation and educational approach. Through a combination of onsite visuals and interviews of founders, teachers, learners and parents, we present our members in the form of short video capsules.



TUTORIAL PACKAGE

While most of the above videos were filmed by QUEST during visits to our members, we have also created a filming tutorial package for our members. Carefully designed as a colorful and fun pedagogical kit accessible to young and adult learners alike, this 12-page document explains every step of how to create quality footage with minimum production means, and lays out every interview and visuals needed for our "Quest Presents its Members" video series. Once our member sends us the footage, QUEST takes care of editing and disseminating the videos.



PROJECTS

In 2023 QUEST was involved in **7 European Erasmus+ projects**.

BUILDING SKILLS THROUGH TRAINING THERAPY ANIMALS (BUSTA)

Erasmus+ project

24 months, from the 28th of February 2022 until the 27th of February 2024.

Coordinator: Lithuanian Sea Museum (Lithuania)

With the BUSTA project students had the opportunity to have real life impact that goes beyond the boundaries of the school, on the lives of persons with disabilities: they developed research and cooperative actions to integrate service animal training with dogs, horses and dolphins.



DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN NATURE (DEN)

Erasmus+ project

15 months, from the 1st of April 2022 to the 30th of June 2023.

Coordinator: QUEST (Belgium)

DEN project mission is to systematize and disseminate a new developing educational and pedagogical approach that bridges Education in Nature with Democratic Education, we call it Democratic Education in Nature- DEN - in order to promote children's inner motivation and talents, active citizenship and environmental stewardship.

DEMOCRATIC EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS (DESC)

Erasmus+ project

30 months, from the 28th of February 2022 to the 31th of July 2024.

Coordinator: GO! Scholengroep Brussel (Belgium)

The project aims at promoting the integration of the democratic educational approach into the European education systems, as a way of fostering life and citizenship competences in schools to take up their responsibilities and social commitments, and to fulfill their talents.



PROJECTS

YOUTH IN EQUINE-ASSISTED THERAPY (YEAT)

Erasmus+ project
20 months, from 1st of November 2021 to 1st of July 2023.
Coordinator: Paint & Quarter Horse Foundation (Bulgaria)

YEAT project aims to develop the valuable role of youth in equine-assisted therapy practices.



OUTSIDE

Erasmus+ project
30 months, from the 1st of October 2020 to the 30th of March 2023.
Coordinator: Istituto Fermi (Italy)

The mission of OUTSIDE project is to support European schools promoting the acquisition of innovative skills working together on green business ideas and helping students to promote experimentation, cooperation and team work in view of developing sustainable business projects that help schools connect with local communities. This project aims to empower both students (aged 11-16) and teachers as change agents in their local communities.



YOUTH GOING BACK TO NATURE (YGBN)

Erasmus+ project
30 months, from the 1st of May 2023 until the 1st of November 2025.
Coordinator: Paint & Quarter Horse Foundation (Bulgaria)

The project aims to aid young people with fewer opportunities in their mental and physical improvement, personal and professional development by bringing them back to nature through Environmentally Sustainable Outdoor Activities (ESOA).



SOCIOCRACY IN SCHOOLS (SOCIS)

Erasmus+ project
16 months, from the 1st of April 2022 to the 1st of August 2023.
Coordinator: QUEST (Belgium)

This project aims to support the development of Sociocracy in European Schools, in order to foster the emergence of innovative and democratic educational centers enabling all school actors to actively participate in the decision-making process.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Revenues

Structural funding	112.000 EUR
Projects	99.263,16 EUR
ESC	27.931 EUR

Total Revenues 239.194.16 EUR

Expenditures

Running costs	-39690.31 EUR
Staff expenses	-103784.02 EUR
ESC/Volunteering costs	-33725.99 EUR
Project Costs	-41636.04 EUR
Training/Travels/Conferences	-6432.58 EUR

Total Expenditures -225.268.94 EUR

Net Result 13,925.22 EUR





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